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Security and resilience — Community resilience — Guidelines for supporting vulnerable persons in an emergency

Sécurité et résilience — Résilience des communautés — Lignes directrices pour soutenir la réponse communautaire aux personnes vulnérables

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Foreword

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The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 292, *Security and resilience*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

This document gives guidelines for identifying individuals who are the most vulnerable to an emergency and how to include them in the preparation, response and recovery from events, incidents and emergencies. Emergencies have different effects on people; for example, some individuals will become less able to anticipate, cope with, resist or recover from the impacts of an emergency. An individual is not defined as vulnerable by the nature of their vulnerability, but by their personal circumstances at the time of the emergency. A person's vulnerability to an emergency is influenced by many factors and can vary in different environmental, political, cultural and social contexts. It is widely acknowledged that persons who are vulnerable to an emergency require specific kinds of assistance. However, there is less understanding and guidance on how to recognize the individuals who are vulnerable in different emergency situations, and how to support them. This can be because vulnerability changes over time, so persons move in and out of being vulnerable, even to the same event, incident or emergency. Relevant factors include age, economic security, language and health, but also the effects of broader processes such as climate change, international security and national political trends.

In large numbers and in different contexts, vulnerable persons are not always recognized or there are too many and they could overwhelm emergency response teams. Furthermore, other types of support structures exist for vulnerable persons, but these might be fractured in an emergency. It is important to understand and implement best practices for recognizing and including vulnerable persons in all phases of emergency preparedness, response and recovery. In particular, this requires an understanding of what creates vulnerability in order to ensure persons are not overlooked or more negatively impacted through the management of emergencies.

This document emphasizes capacity building and community resilience. It recognizes that vulnerable persons and their representatives are key stakeholders and planning partners. It considers the preparatory measures for involving vulnerable persons in decisions made about providing assistance before, during and after an emergency, the planning required to engage vulnerable persons and their representatives, and the ways in which including vulnerable persons will help to increase understanding about those vulnerabilities and contribute towards their personal well-being during an emergency.

Security and resilience — Community resilience — Guidelines for supporting vulnerable persons in an emergency

1 Scope

This document gives guidelines for organizations to identify, involve, communicate with and support individuals who are the most vulnerable to natural and human-induced (both intentional and unintentional) emergencies. It also includes guidelines for continually improving the provision of support to vulnerable persons in an emergency.

It is intended for use by organizations with the responsibility for, or involvement in, part or all of the planning for working with vulnerable persons in an emergency.

It is applicable to all types and sizes of organizations involved in emergency preparation, response and recovery activities, such as local, regional and national governments; statutory bodies; international and non-governmental organizations; businesses; and public and community groups.

The focus of this document is on vulnerable individuals and their needs in relation to an emergency.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 22300, *Security and resilience — Vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 22300 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at http://www.electropedia.org/

3.1
carer
individual who provides support to a *vulnerable person* (3.2)

Note 1 to entry: Carers can be paid or unpaid providers of care.

3.2
vulnerable person
individual who might be less able to anticipate, cope with, resist or recover from the impacts of an emergency

Note 1 to entry: In this document, a vulnerable person is not defined by the nature of the vulnerability but by their personal circumstances at the time of the emergency.

4 Identifying vulnerable persons in an emergency

4.1 General

The general aspects to be addressed when considering vulnerable persons in an emergency are

— identifying types of vulnerabilities (4.2),

— identifying vulnerable persons (4.3),

— identifying how vulnerable persons could assist others (4.4), and

— establishing information sharing arrangements (4.5).

An organization may implement all clauses of this document or only some clauses. Partial implementation of this document could still improve the organization's performance.

4.2 Identifying types of vulnerabilities

The organization should

— identify the contributing factors that make some individuals vulnerable to an emergency (e.g. physical, mental, emotional, cognitive, cultural, ethnicity, religion, language, citizenship, location, socioeconomic status, age, gender),

— determine the different kinds of vulnerabilities that exist and are relevant in an emergency,

— identify how these causes impact on the interaction between vulnerable persons and the emergency (e.g. the consequences of slower reaction times),

— determine the types of support that vulnerable persons might benefit from before, during and after an emergency,

— identify the reasons why some vulnerable persons prepare for an emergency and why others don't prepare,

— find out the questions that vulnerable persons have that could aid their preparation, response and recovery from an emergency,

— establish the challenges and opportunities that vulnerable persons face to aid their preparation for, response to, and recovery from an emergency,

— identify how vulnerable persons might react to an emergency (e.g. whether they will follow instructions from officials), and

— assess the impacts of different methods of communication on vulnerable persons.

The process of identifying vulnerable persons should

— analyse information about individuals using population-level information to gain a broader understanding of vulnerable persons,

— include difficult-to-reach groups that involve vulnerable persons, such as those whose interests are not well represented in decision-making structures,

— engage communities, local authorities and other organizations in the planning for an emergency,

— recognize that the vulnerability of individuals can change over time and that vulnerable persons might overestimate their own capabilities and so might not have an accurate estimate of their ability to respond,

— include that carers might support vulnerable persons and need assistance to do this during an emergency,

— learn from past emergencies and where vulnerable persons were located, and

— recognize the differences between vulnerable persons who live in remote, rural, urban and transient populations.

4.3 Identifying vulnerable persons

The organization should

— analyse how the impacts of an emergency might cause individuals to be vulnerable,

— develop and implement a process to identify the number of vulnerable persons and places where they might be (e.g. schools, hospitals, care homes); this process should acknowledge the changing nature of vulnerabilities and emergencies and be regularly updated, especially when major changes occur in the demographic,

— identify and prioritize vulnerable persons using databases from service providers,

— provide a system that allows vulnerable persons and their carers to voluntarily register before an emergency,

— identify contact points with vulnerable persons before an emergency as part of a communication strategy (see Clause 5),

— assess the number of individuals who might be vulnerable to different emergencies,

— assess the number of vulnerable persons who might benefit from particular types of support,

— assess the number of vulnerable persons who have prepared for an emergency and the types of preparations they have made, and

— recognize that not all vulnerable persons will require assistance.

4.4 Identifying how vulnerable persons can assist others

The organization should

— determine how vulnerable persons can assist other people who are affected by the emergency,

— identify opportunities for vulnerable persons who want to provide assistance to others, and

NOTE For further guidance on planning the involvement of spontaneous volunteers in incident response and recovery, see ISO 22319.

— support vulnerable persons as they provide assistance to ensure their own stresses are recognized.

4.5 Establishing information sharing arrangements

The organization should

— identify the stakeholder relationships (e.g. with the local emergency management organizations) needed to effectively share information for the support of vulnerable persons in an emergency,

— identify how, when and what information can be shared about vulnerable persons with stakeholders within an applicable privacy protection framework, and

— share the information with stakeholders who need to consider vulnerable persons when they conduct their work (e.g. local partners in emergency management).

5 Communicating with vulnerable persons in an emergency

5.1 General

When communicating with vulnerable persons, the organization should consider their abilities and needs as well as the potential impact of the emergency on them. The organization should provide information to vulnerable persons and those who work with them.

The general aspects to be addressed when preparing for, and responding to, an emergency are

— communicating information to vulnerable persons before, during and after an emergency (5.2),

— understanding the limitations of different media in communicating with vulnerable persons (5.3),

— providing awareness, skills and knowledge on how to work with vulnerable persons (5.4),

— making vulnerable persons aware of preparations made by the organization (5.5),

— providing information on how vulnerable persons can prepare themselves (5.6), and

— providing information during an emergency on how vulnerable persons can respond (5.7).

5.2 Communicating information for vulnerable persons before, during and after an emergency

The organization should be familiar with the general principles of public warning and coloured coded alerts.

NOTE For further information on public warning, see ISO 22322. For further information on coloured coded alerts, see ISO 22324.

In addition, when communicating information for vulnerable persons, the organization should

— identify general information to be provided to all vulnerable persons, for example,

  — contact details to request assistance from the organization during an emergency or for an independent authority that can deal with serious complaints about service delivery,

  — preparations that could increase their resilience (e.g. participate in developing a community action plan, plan escape routes), and

  — provisions for service animals (e.g. guide dogs) and non-service animals (e.g. pets) regarding evacuation transport and emergency shelters,

— identify specific information to be made available depending on the risks (e.g. predictions for flood severity, fire spread rates),

— disseminate information through trusted communications (e.g. TV, internet, radio, loudspeaker, social media, messengers),

— identify alternative communication methods for specific needs (e.g. sign language, visual aids),

— provide messages in different languages before, during and after an emergency,

— have substitute systems for communication during an emergency in case primary communication channels are not available,

— provide ways for vulnerable persons to notify others of their need for assistance during an emergency (e.g. a dedicated phone number, using available technologies such as personal care alarms), and

— decide what is the aim of the information (e.g. to raise awareness, to create a lasting behaviour change, such as on the benefit of preparing and how to prepare) and seek feedback from all

stakeholders on the appropriateness of information that has been issued to achieve the aim; use the feedback to improve the information.

5.3 Understanding the limitations of different media in communicating with vulnerable persons

The organization should

— identify the effectiveness of different channels to communicate with different types of vulnerable persons and places where groups of vulnerable persons might be,

— consider how information is communicated to vulnerable persons in the most appropriate and effective ways that respect the causes of their vulnerability (e.g. written form, face-to-face, visual video recordings, accessibility, representation),

— develop means of communication to be used before and during different types of emergency (e.g. leaflets, fridge magnets, sirens, website, social media, radio, TV, signage), and

— consider the limitation of an automated telephone warning message for vulnerable persons, for example,

  — consider how long it might take a person with reduced mobility to pick up the telephone, in order to ensure sufficient time is given before the dialling is cut off,

  — decide whether the vulnerable person would be called back if they did not answer the first call, and

  — enable the vulnerable person to replay the telephone message as they listen to it, in case they do not understand it the first time.

5.4 Providing awareness, skills and knowledge on how to work with vulnerable persons

In preparing for an emergency, the organization should

— promote awareness within communities about the potential to support vulnerable persons,

— identify what skills and knowledge are needed to work with individuals with different causes of vulnerability,

— ensure the staff and members of the public who will work with vulnerable persons have the skills and knowledge to safely provide support,

— understand the sensitivities involved in accessing and working with vulnerable persons, and

— identify the additional needs of those who work with vulnerable persons (e.g. the provision of psycho-social support).

5.5 Making vulnerable persons aware of preparations made by the organization

In preparing for an emergency, the organization should

— make vulnerable persons aware of the preparations made by the organization in their area and the essential services that will be available to them before, during and after an emergency,

— communicate the arrangements in place for vulnerable persons to identify themselves to the organization, and

— ensure there are opportunities for vulnerable persons and groups that represent them to provide input to the preparations made by the organization.

5.6 Providing information on how vulnerable persons can prepare themselves

The organization should communicate information to vulnerable persons in advance of an emergency, including

- advice on personal safety,
- how to prepare themselves, their property and their possessions for an emergency, including
  - where and how to source information, assistance and reassurance,
  - what information to seek before, during and after an emergency (e.g. suitable evacuation routes and evacuation procedures), and
  - possible short-term changes required to permit them to remain in their property, and
- how to prepare themselves to support others, including supporting neighbours and considering the contributions they might wish to make to the response or recovery.

5.7 Providing information during an emergency on how vulnerable persons can respond

The organization should follow the plan to provide information to vulnerable persons during the emergency, including

- official advice for what vulnerable persons need to do,
- expected duration away from their house, as this will affect how they prepare the property and what they pack to take with them,
- routes to places of safety,
- information on how vulnerable persons ought to react to the warning message (e.g. whether to pass it on to other people, and understanding what the barriers are to this),
- the severity level associated with the emergency,
- where vulnerable persons can get essential resources (e.g. water, “take home” resources, information), and
- the availability of evacuation transport.

6 Providing support for vulnerable persons in an emergency

6.1 General

Practical actions to support vulnerable persons and their carers either before, during or after an emergency include

- providing practical support to vulnerable persons (6.2),
- providing physiological support to vulnerable persons (6.3),
- providing psychosocial support to vulnerable persons (6.4),
- offering practical support to travel away from the affected area (6.5), and
- determining sheltering needs for vulnerable persons (6.6).

6.2 Providing practical support to vulnerable persons

The organization should use the findings of their research (see 4.2 and 4.3) to identify the practical support needs of vulnerable persons and their carers before, during and after an emergency, to

— identify the longer time frame needed when vulnerable persons are involved,

— identify the additional needs of vulnerable persons on resettling,

— consider the mechanism through which to deliver practical support, for example,

  — establish relationships with public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations and local charities,

  — facilitate community-based networks to support vulnerable persons (e.g. phone chains to disseminate the warning message),

  — facilitate clubs and societies that have interest in emergencies (e.g. Neighbourhood Watch), and

  — pair a volunteer (e.g. carer) with a vulnerable person who would benefit from support,

— identify strategies or additional resources to involve difficult-to-reach groups, and

— assess the availability of resources to vulnerable persons (e.g. human, technical and financial resources).

6.3 Providing physiological support to vulnerable persons

The organization should

— identify the physiological needs that vulnerable persons have before, during and after an emergency,

— provide shelter against environmental conditions to ensure survival, and

— provide physiological support to reduce the stress on vulnerable persons and their carers before, during and after an emergency, including

  — basic physical comfort suitable for persons with different needs (e.g. glasses, chairs and beds to sit and sleep in, and special cushions to prevent life-threatening pressure sores, noting that persons with physical disabilities might need more space and privacy),

  — toilets and a need for a range of flexible toileting provisions as well as items such as commodes, incontinence pads, raised toilet seats and hoists,

  — access to medications and health support for vulnerable persons (individuals or groups) with complex health needs,

  — security of controlled medications,

  — mobility aids (e.g. walking aids, wheelchairs),

  — carers who are trained in supporting vulnerable persons (e.g. specialist lifting, toileting persons who are immobile),

  — supplies for the management of medical conditions (e.g. anti-convulsive medications for epilepsy, eye drops, diabetes supplies, complex dietary needs such as avoiding foods with certain ingredients or colours), and

  — accommodation support (e.g. returning to previous accommodation or moving into new housing).

6.4 Providing psychosocial support to vulnerable persons

The organization should

- identify the psychosocial needs that vulnerable persons might have before, during and after an emergency,
- provide psychosocial support to reduce the stressors from the emergency on vulnerable persons and their carers, including
  - information on how to maintain their psychosocial well-being,
  - comfort from someone to listen and to share concerns with,
  - carers who are trained in supporting vulnerable persons (e.g. calming someone with a mental health condition),
  - ways of contacting relatives or close friends to lower the stress on the vulnerable person,
  - allowing access to personal items that persons need for comfort (e.g. mobile phone, money, shoes, sentimental items, TV, keys),
  - provision for animals to reduce anxiety about pets, and
  - considering ways to not exacerbate the stress experienced by vulnerable persons (e.g. the need for animal-free shelters and providing quiet spaces), and
- provide ongoing support for vulnerable persons when they move into new or previous accommodation.

6.5 Offering practical support to travel away from the affected area

The organization should

- identify how vulnerable persons usually travel around their area when there is no emergency,
- assess whether those means of travel will be available during different types of emergency,
- consider what alternatives might be available during an emergency (e.g. taxi companies might not be operational if the taxi drivers are attending to their own families),
- determine the number of vulnerable persons who will need evacuation transportation,
- provide information on publicly available transportation during an emergency, including
  - easily accessible central meeting points to board evacuation transportation,
  - how persons with physical limitations can get to a central meeting point,
  - how persons with physical limitations will be assisted (e.g. to ascend the high steps onto a vehicle), and
  - where the transportation will take them to, especially if they have options that will take them closer to friends/relatives that they could eventually go to stay with, and
- give information on what to do with domestic pets and other animals before, during and after an emergency (e.g. how these should be transported or protected).

6.6 Determining emergency sheltering needs for vulnerable persons

The organization should

- consider the willingness of vulnerable persons to move to an emergency shelter,

— identify the expectations and needs of vulnerable persons who intend to use emergency shelters,

— provide sufficient shelter places for vulnerable persons and their carers,

— develop a plan to provide appropriate levels of support to vulnerable persons in shelters,

— determine the expectations of vulnerable persons who do not intend to use emergency shelters and consider the potential to provide support,

— consider what support vulnerable persons might need if they shelter-in-place, and

— determine what support is needed for vulnerable persons to leave the shelter and go to new or previous accommodation.

7 Implementing, reviewing and improving

7.1 General

To ensure the plan is effective, the organization should

— implement the plan for supporting vulnerable persons (7.2), and

— review and improve the plan (7.3).

7.2 Implementing a plan for supporting vulnerable persons

The organization should

— develop procedures and governance structures to implement the plan, and

— involve stakeholders (including vulnerable persons and the organizations that represent them) to identify requirements for implementing the plan, and exercise the plan.

NOTE For guidance on designing and implementing exercises, see ISO 22398.

7.3 Reviewing and improving the plan

The organization should

— review its plan and practices on working with vulnerable persons and their carers,

— improve its plan with lessons learned from exercises and recent emergencies,

— refresh the skills and knowledge of those who might work with vulnerable persons in an emergency,

— maintain and update any databases and voluntary registries on vulnerable persons,

— build relationships and seek feedback from vulnerable persons, the organizations that represent them and wider stakeholders on how to further develop the plan, practices, skills and capacities to address outstanding needs of vulnerable persons in an emergency, and

— improve its plan and practices in alignment with the feedback.

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